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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Liberal International (World Liberal Union), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 August 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Responsibility to protect ten years on: strengthening the global approach to the prevention and elimination of mass atrocities

Liberal International welcomes the latest report of the UN Special Advisor on the Responsibility to Protect, Dr. Jennifer Welsh, to the 68th Session of the UN General Assembly and fully aligns with its conclusions on the necessity to build stronger global partnership when it comes to the collective responsibility of implementing the Responsibility to Protect principle.

This statement would like to pay particular attention to the need to strengthen the global approach to the prevention and elimination of mass atrocities in an age when armed conflicts and violent extremists' attacks on basic human rights and freedoms are on the rise.

Recognizing that:

-10 years since the establishment of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) Principle little progress has been achieved in its wider implementation

-Military intervention as a policing operation is not an outright application of force when implementing RtoP

-RtoP should be implemented only as a last resort with efforts on prevention coming first

-Collective action must be taken only when peaceful means are inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity

-The armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic remains unresolved constituting the largest failure of the international community to prevent mass killings since the inception of the RtoP principle with more than 200,000 Syrians killed so far, 4 million registered as refugees and 7 million as internally displaced people

-According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Set, the number of conflicts in Africa has tripled for the past few years

Expressing deep concern that:

- The UN Security Council has so far failed to express a clear view on the mass atrocities in Syria and so failed to protect the people of Syria

-While RtoP has evolved as a concept, it has failed to incorporate further dimensions such as the responsibility to intervene and to rebuild: two dimensions absolutely vital for the successful resolution of any humanitarian crisis

-Humanitarian assistance has become more and more politicised

-Too many perpetrators of war crimes continue to evade accountability with such impunity denying victims justice and reparations and producing an environment conducive to the continuing perpetration of these crimes

-Major challenges towards the implementation of the RtoP doctrine remain due to a lack of political will, different interpretations of what constitutes a "war crime" and inadequate resource-allocation to peace-keeping missions around the world

Stressing on the fact that:

-The use of force under the RtoP concept should reflect a view of "sovereignty to protect", with each state adopting a positive duty to protect its own citizens

-Regional organisations have an important role to play in situations where intervention on humanitarian ground is necessary and therefore should be empowered to carry just as much responsibility in atrocities prevention and elimination as the UN Security Council

-There needs to be a commitment to avoiding conflict at all times by using peaceful means and putting the primary objective on prevention not on military intervention

-Preventing genocide should be a core national security principle and a moral responsibility

-The recent veto by the UN Security Council on a resolution commemorating the Srebrenica genocide represents a major setback in the global commitment towards the fulfilment of the RtoP principle and will significantly hinder the ability to prevent genocides in the future

Recalling:

-Its Resolution to the 28th Session of the UN Human Rights Council on the protection of human rights in areas of conflict which called on the United Nations to attempt a political solution offering protection and participation of all Syrian groups in the future democratic political solution for Syria based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law

-Its Resolution to the 24th Session of the UN Human Rights Council on the ever-deteriorating crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic which urged the Human Rights Council to recommend to the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court

-Its Resolution on the 53th Congress in Sofia which called for the advance of the international community's sense of obligation to intervene and prevent widespread atrocities

Calls:

-On the international community to invest in development, economic capacity and democracy-building in fragile states as a first step to preventing mass atrocities
- On all UN member states to assume the interrelated responsibilities to prevent, to react, and to rebuild in situations of mass atrocities

- For the strengthening of the International Criminal Court as the first permanent international judicial body mandated to investigate the commission of atrocity crimes

-On all UN member states to ratify the Rome Statute and so strengthen the scope and legitimacy of the ICC

- On all signatory states of the Rome Statute to fully comply with their obligations and support the ICC by arresting suspected war criminals that are in their jurisdiction and transfer them to The Hague

-For the inclusion of women in the prevention and re-building aspect of the RtoP principle

-On the United Nations to develop a rapid-response mechanism for addressing urgent humanitarian crises and armed conflicts including but not limited to a corps of military officers available for deployment in cases of authorised intervention under a RtoP UN Security Council resolution

-On the international community to formulate a strategy on how to deal with mass atrocities committed by non-state groups such as Daesh, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda, and others

-On regional organisations to assume prime responsibility for the prevention and elimination of mass atrocities in their respective regional areas as the only way towards achieving long-term conflict resolution

Commits:

-For its Human Rights Committee to continue to work towards the mobilisation of global support for the application of the RtoP principle as a core priority of its human rights policy development activities

-For its liberal parliamentarians to develop a roadmap on the future of RtoP as a direct outcome of the bi-annual meeting of LI Human Rights Committee commemorating the ten year anniversary since the establishment of the principle

-For its liberal parliamentarians to continue to promote public debate about RtoP and support the work of academic institutes and NGOs in order to promote knowledge of the principle

-To build a broader coalition on the importance of promoting RtoP as a model for effective international collaboration by involving other political internationals and like-minded human rights organizations

-To continue to raise awareness about the importance of preventing humanitarian crises and genocide by engaging with relevant regional and international actors, liberal leaders in government and opposition and the broader civil society sector